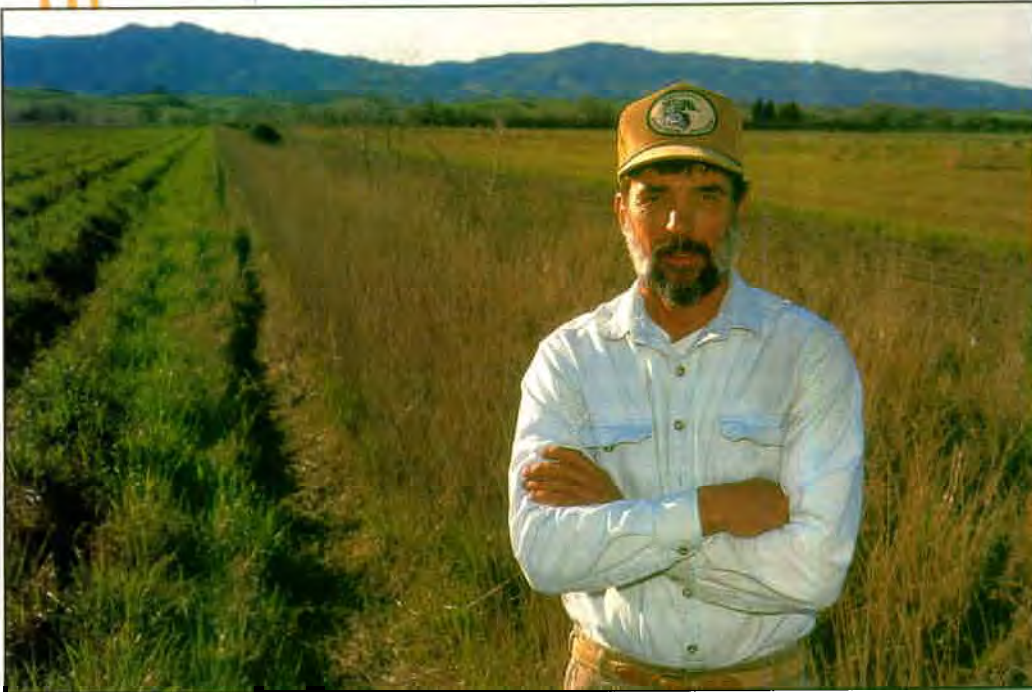


John Anderson

Hedgerow Farms, Yolo County



JACK KELLY CLARK

For more than a decade John Anderson has established native vegetation systems in non-farmed areas of his farm.

Planting Hedgerows, Road Corridors, and Unused Areas

When Charlie Rominger tells people that Road 88 is the best stretch of road in Yolo County, he's talking about the west side of the road, just north of John and Marsha Anderson's home on Hedgerow Farms.

Rominger is referring to the lush native trees, grasses, and insectary plants bordering roads and fields, the ponds, and the often visible wildlife associated with Anderson's 500-acre farming operation. It's a view you can see any season of the year because these non-cropped areas are not clean-farmed.

"Frankly, I hated being surrounded by a barren landscape from plowdown to spring planting," says Anderson. "I also missed the presence of wildlife. Yolo County used to boast one of

the state's finest pheasant populations."

Since 1978, Anderson has been planting his berms, borders, equipment yard perimeters, and roadside corridors with native grasses, shrubs, and trees to recreate habitat for native wildlife. After a decade-and-a-half of testing and refining native plant habitat corridor systems, he has succeeded in reestablishing outstanding wildlife habitat and has used native vegetation to virtually eliminate expensive routine spraying and disking programs.

"Face it," says Anderson, whose farm produces irrigated row crops and native grass seeds, "we spray, disk, and scrape to control and eliminate noxious weeds. Clean farming

should mean weed-free, not vegetation-free. A balanced, self-sustaining native grassland simply out competes any weedy invasion. And the excellent, year-round wildlife habitat these vegetated corridors provide has no negative impact on farming practices." Some of Bruce and Charlie Rominger's fields abut Anderson's vegetated borders and they concur—there's no significant impact on their crop production. In fact, they were so impressed they've initiated some native plant corridors of their own.

Growing native grasses requires an initial investment and maintenance effort, but establishing native grass stands is much like growing permanent pasture or alfalfa. Since perennial grasses grow more slowly, the first year is important. Properly-timed planting, selective herbicide spraying, and mowing are requirements for success. Native seed prices have come down substantially and a wide variety of native and non-native perennial grass seed is now available. Through testing, Anderson and others have also eliminated much of the guesswork in managing native habitat corridors.

One look at Anderson's native habitat corridors shows that they provide weed and erosion control. They significantly reduce disking and spraying expenses. "The benefits for wildlife have been nothing short of astounding. Over 100 bird species use the farm throughout the year, including pheasants, doves, and quail that are harvested during hunting season. And the beneficial insects, spiders, reptiles, and amphibians provide clear farming benefits," says Anderson. "I don't know any farmers who have given it a serious try that want to go back to clean farming."